
Higher Education Committee

HB 1594

Brief Description: Creating the environmental cleanup opportunity grant program.

Sponsors: Representatives Hudgins, Hunt, Rolfes, Hasegawa, White, Eddy, McCoy, Wood, Conway and Kenney.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides up to 10, two-year scholarships to students who major in a program of study leading to an environmental career in the cleanup of hazardous substances at contaminated facilities.
- Allows funds from the State Toxics Control Account to be used for the Environmental Cleanup Opportunity Grant Program.

Hearing Date: 2/6/09

Staff: Andi Smith (786-7304)

Background:

Conditional Scholarships

Conditional scholarships are loans that are forgiven if a student fulfills specific education and work requirements. Typically, the scholarships provide incentive for students to seek careers in areas of critical state need. If students do not fulfill the specified requirements, they are obligated to pay the loan back.

Department of Ecology - Toxics Cleanup Program

Accidental spills of dangerous materials and past business practices have contaminated land and water throughout the state. The Toxics Cleanup Program works to remedy these situations, which range from cleaning up contamination from leaking underground storage tanks, to large, complex projects requiring engineered solutions. Examples of current projects include sediment management of aquatic lands, cleanup of contaminated sites around the Puget Sound, and cleanup of current and former gas station sites in voluntary agreement with Shell Oil company.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill:

The Environmental Cleanup Opportunity Grant Program is created. The Higher Education Coordinating Board administers the program and provides up to 10 scholarships per year to students who (a) major in a program leading to work in environmental cleanup, (b) attain a bachelor's degree, and (c) work at an eligible employer for the equivalent of two years of full-time work within the first five years after graduation. Eligible places of work include the Department of Ecology's Toxic Cleanup Program or other public and private firms engaged in projects or programs primarily dedicated to the cleanup of hazardous materials.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board may select scholarship recipients or work in partnership with the Department of Ecology to do so. If the Board selects the recipients, it must establish a selection committee. The total yearly award cannot exceed the tuition and fees at the University of Washington. Recipients are eligible to receive the scholarship for two years. One year of loan is forgiven for every year of work in environmental cleanup. If scholarship recipients fail to meet the educational and work requirements, they are obligated to repay the conditional scholarship, including interest and fees.

Funding for the program may be provided through the State Toxics Control Account, private philanthropy, and loan repayments.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 2, 2009.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.